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Summary record of the 3rd meeting
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Chair: Mr. Gunnarsson ..... (Iceland)
later: Ms. Al-Temimi (Vice-Chair) ..... (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/72/158 and A/72/211)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/72/159, A/72/161 and A/72/161/Corr.1, A/72/166, A/72/189 and A/72/190)

1. **Mr. Richardson** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM was committed to eradicating poverty, ending hunger, combating inequality and building just and inclusive societies, in line with the goals set forth in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. The secretariat of CARICOM had been working with Caribbean Community member States, institutions and organizations, as well as regional and international partners, to develop and implement initiatives to enable individuals in the region to realize their full development potential, of which a recent example was the Regional Human Resource Development 2030 Strategy, adopted in March 2017. The springboard for the implementation of that strategy, the Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community (2015–2019), was focused on building economic, social, environmental and technological resilience, with the aim of fostering economic growth, reducing poverty and unemployment, and improving quality of life and integration within the Community through a systems approach. Social resilience, in particular, was a key strategic priority for the Community that would require concentrating on the key drivers of economic reform; fostering youth development; advancing health and wellness; and enhancing crime prevention initiatives and programmes. In that connection, the devastating impact of the ongoing hurricane season in the Caribbean region had demonstrated the need to strengthen the capacities of CARICOM countries to withstand the unpredictable challenges increasingly faced by small, vulnerable nations.

3. Social inequality persisted, as certain individuals and social groups continued to be denied opportunities, access to resources, a voice, and respect for their rights and citizenship on the basis of their age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, disability and economic status. Reducing income inequality between countries remained particularly challenging, as the current rate of reduction in global income inequality was expected to halt, owing to stagnant or slow growth across regions and high population growth in countries with a high incidence of poverty where wide inequality and patterns of growth that were not sufficiently inclusive coexisted. In advanced economies, the gap between rich and poor had reached the highest level in decades, with recent data from Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries showing that the richest 10 per cent of the population earned 9.6 times the income of the poorest 10 per cent.

4. Human beings were the primary source and the ultimate determinant of the development process. In that regard, investment in building institutional and human resource capacities within government agencies in order to ensure their successful engagement in, and management of, multi-stakeholder partnerships was of critical importance, particularly in view of the recent shift in the geography of global poverty towards middle-income countries, which accounted for almost three quarters of the world's poor. Strengthening social development would require promoting inclusive institutions, enhancing social participation and pursuing development goals within appropriate structural frameworks. In that connection, CARICOM had been reformulating its development agenda to reflect a greater emphasis on, inter alia, regionalism and reform of governance mechanisms.

5. **Ms. Moldoisaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that concerted efforts by the international community had resulted in significant progress in global social development and that social rights were now at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to eliminate poverty, ensure full employment and decent work for all, and achieve social integration. In addition, coordinated and comprehensive measures were needed to address mass movements of refugees and migrants and escalating inequality.

6. Her Government was formulating a national development strategy for 2040 aimed at reducing poverty, strengthening food security, ensuring high-quality education and health care, and improving economic growth, energy development and environmental protection. At the heart of the strategy was a project designed to increase transparency at the level of the central Government and prevent corruption, as well as to improve the quality and security of living conditions, strengthen education and

health care, and overcome the digital divide in order to create a knowledge-based society.

7. As a result of her country's commitment to increasing the number of children receiving a preschool and primary school education, more than 98 per cent of children in Kyrgyzstan had attended school in 2016. Her Government had also adopted a strategy to enhance the quality of, and expand access to, education by 2020, and the infant mortality rate in Kyrgyzstan had decreased from 66 to 29 per thousand between 1997 and 2014. The importance of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the welfare, empowerment and protection of the rights of children could not be overemphasized.

8. Kyrgyzstan had strong legal and political frameworks for the protection of the rights of women. In that connection, it had adopted a national strategy to achieve gender equality by 2020, which focused on strengthening women's participation in the economy, ensuring their equal political participation, and enhancing their access to job-specific education and legal resources. All draft legislation was subject to compulsory review from a gender perspective prior to adoption, and the Government had established a national council on gender, which comprised representatives of more than 10,000 non-governmental organizations. Efforts had also been made to increase the representation of women in the central Government and local and judicial bodies, and provisions of the national Criminal Code relating to domestic violence had been strengthened. Moreover, in May 2017, a new law had been enacted on protection from domestic violence, covering spouses in civil and polygamous marriages, as well as former spouses cohabitating out of necessity.

9. **Ms. Bellout** (Algeria) said that the international community must redouble its efforts and allocate adequate resources to implement global initiatives to promote inclusive development and the well-being of humanity, including, in particular, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, she called on the Organization to devote particular attention to the needs of Africa, and to complement the work of the African Union, which had recently adopted the African Union Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth, by stepping up its efforts to combat extreme poverty, disease and the negative repercussions of natural disasters and global crises.

10. Since 2000, Algeria had placed social development at the core of its national development policies and plans, including those it had formulated with a view to combating poverty, creating decent job opportunities for all, revitalizing rural areas, attracting investment and improving the country's infrastructure. To achieve sustainable development, high growth rates and full employment, Algeria was seeking not only to reduce levels of extreme poverty but to eradicate that phenomenon entirely, while also upholding the principles of non-violence and respect for human rights. To that end, Algeria had established a number of national bodies and programmes that provided financial assistance and social services to the heads of poor households and individuals who were unable to work, as well as to persons with disabilities and older persons. Algeria had also adopted a national plan to strengthen social solidarity, particularly among marginalized groups, by supporting the development of productive family networks, as well as policies to promote economic diversification, and was striving to uphold the principle of equality of opportunity, particularly for young people, women and persons with disabilities.

11. In closing, she underscored that Algeria would continue to work with its partners in the region and beyond with a view to designing and implementing development initiatives that made use of innovative technologies.

12. **Mr. Wu** Haitao (China) said that the international community should give greater priority to poverty eradication, employment and social integration, the three social development issues at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. To that end, Member States must establish appropriate operational mechanisms to implement the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and expedite the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals in areas such as poverty eradication, education, health and employment.

13. In line with the principle of people-centred development, countries must establish universal and sustainable social protection systems designed on the basis of objective evidence and underpinned by rationalized funding structures, with a view to achieving full employment and decent work for all, including vulnerable groups. Efforts must also be made to bolster innovation and connectivity by advancing structural reform, developing new modalities of growth and promoting the construction of infrastructure in order to stay apace of prevailing social and historical trends.

14. In order to develop awareness of a shared future for humanity and to rectify the emerging imbalance between North and South, initiatives should be undertaken to maintain the status of North-South cooperation as the main channel for development cooperation, with South-South cooperation playing a critical complementary role. In that regard, developed countries should continue to assist developing countries by honouring their official development assistance commitments.

15. China had a highly developed social protection system comprising a pension system, in which 888 million residents in urban and rural areas had been enrolled at the end of 2016, and a basic medical insurance system, which had covered 1.3 billion people at the end of that year, equivalent to 95 per cent of the population. His Government was also working to achieve innovative, coordinated and eco-friendly development and to promote mass entrepreneurship and innovation. In line with its commitment to eradicating poverty in the developing world, China would contribute 400 billion yuan, over the next three years, for livelihood projects to be undertaken by developing countries and international organizations participating in the Government's Belt and Road Initiative, which focused on promoting development in more than 60 countries and regions along the Silk Road Economic Belt between Europe and Asia. His Government would also collaborate with African countries in following up on the outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and in advancing the 10 major plans to boost cooperation between China and Africa in order to support implementation of the Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda.

16. **Ms. Phipps** (United States of America) said that, because youth were affected by all aspects of development, Member States must consider the impact of their decisions on young people and seek to include them in efforts to address development challenges.

17. Bullying, in particular through social media platforms, had a disproportionate impact on youth and put them at increased risk of mental health problems, substance abuse, exploitation, violent or self-destructive behaviour, and suicide. Youth were often among the most severely affected by social challenges, which made it critical for all members of society to cultivate the values of empathy and communication in order to ensure that young people became good stewards of the world that they would inherit. To that end, strengthening families was particularly important, and better support must be provided to children growing up without their biological families, including those living in foster homes or refugee camps. In that regard, Member States should exchange best practices in developing policies to protect vulnerable youth. Youth with greater access to opportunities should harness the potential of the unprecedented tools and technologies at their disposal in order to identify solutions to the challenges faced by their less fortunate counterparts, in particular those affected by multigenerational poverty, war and conflict.

18. **Ms. Flanagan** (Ireland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, against a global backdrop of armed conflict and political unrest that undermined the rule of law and the protection of human rights, the youth of Ireland called on the international community to be steadfast in its commitment to peace and human rights and to reject the hostile forces that contributed to the large-scale loss of human life. Approximately 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom were under the age of 18, had been forcibly displaced as a result of conflict and persecution, and States had turned away refugees at their borders, in violation of customary international law. The international community must endeavour to combat the populist rhetoric that fuelled discrimination against such groups and hindered the achievement of peace.

19. Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles enshrined in United Nations human rights treaties, young people had a key role to play in building a brighter future. To that end, Governments must recognize the inherent potential of all youth, including young women, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities; reduce inequality by ensuring that youth received a high-level education that equipped them with marketable skills; and respect the right to health of young people, including their access to mental, sexual and reproductive health services. States must also strive to eradicate homelessness, poverty and inequality, including by adopting a progressive and responsible tax model with a zero-tolerance policy towards tax abuse.

20. **Mr. Dockery** (Ireland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda must be intensified as a matter of priority. As young people would be most profoundly affected by a failure to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations and national Governments must ensure that they played a central role in implementing, monitoring and reviewing the 2030 Agenda. In particular, Governments must include them in decision-making processes; grant them the right to vote and to fair and equal employment; provide them with an education in global citizenship; and ensure that they

inherited a physical environment that did not hinder the opportunities of current and future generations.

21. Young women and girls must be empowered to participate in politics and hold public office in order to ensure that public bodies reflected the composition of the populations they served, without discrimination on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or religion. Indeed, only 20 women had addressed the General Assembly in the general debate of the current session, a trend that must be reversed. As Chair of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Ireland urged Member States to consider whether, in their respective national contexts, women were granted the same rights and participated in society on equal footing with men, in particular whether they were afforded equal access to education, employment and health care and had the ability to choose their spouse. Efforts must also be made address the needs of other vulnerable groups, including members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community.

22. **Mr. Cortorreal** (Dominican Republic) said that his Government was seeking to eradicate poverty and overcome inequality by strengthening public policies. Investments in education, health care and youth employment were pillars of the national effort to break the cycle of poverty. In that connection, the Government had implemented a programme that had resulted in the creation of thousands of jobs for, and significant improvement in the lives of, persons living in rural areas, while reducing poverty indicators.

23. Sharing the same vision and objectives as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the National Development Strategy of the Dominican Republic sought to secure the full inclusion of the most vulnerable segments of the population. His Government welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's new Envoy on Youth and looked forward to working closely with her Office. The national Ministry of Youth had launched a number of programmes aimed at ensuring the comprehensive development of young people by promoting their participation in society as global citizens and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship, inclusion and equity. It had also developed a programme that focused on providing guidance to youth facing a broad range of social challenges and was seeking to include youth in decision-making processes.

24. His Government attached high priority to education, with particular attention to student learning processes, teacher training, management of education centres, and the administration of programmes aimed at supporting persons with disabilities. In addition, public policies were in place to protect older persons and enable them to lead an active and productive lifestyle. The Integrated National System for Older Persons recognized that the State, the family and the community were jointly responsible for protecting the dignity and promoting the development of older persons. Public prosecutors' offices had also been established to deal with cases of elder abuse. Notwithstanding the significant progress made, urgent efforts must be undertaken to adopt a legally binding international instrument for the promotion of the human rights of older persons. His delegation welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's new Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility.

25. **Ms. Bergman** (Sweden), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) was a critical tool for involving youth in efforts to strengthen peace in conflict-affected areas and in all nations seeking to eliminate xenophobia, structural racism, homophobia, gun violence and human suffering. She called on the international community to address the shrinking space and resources allocated for engagement with civil society, including by increasing youth participation, which was critical to the strengthening of democracy. Efforts must be made to create an inclusive and enabling environment for all young people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, disability status, sexuality, citizenship or religion, in particular by ensuring their access to welfare systems and free education and by combating prejudice.

26. The age-old scourge of inequality continued to be fuelled by gender-based violence. While she was proud of her country's feminist Government, she urged all Member States to step up their efforts to put an end to gender-based violence and discrimination, particularly in conflict situations. In addition, the wide-ranging effects of climate change — including flooding, which destroyed schools and compromised access to education; extreme heat, which affected access to water and endangered health and lives; and storms, which destroyed homes, hospitals and infrastructure — disproportionately affected vulnerable groups and must be addressed as a matter of priority.

27. **Mr. Bultrikov** (Kazakhstan) said that, notwithstanding the limited resources available for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States must continue their efforts to combat extreme poverty and rising inequality and disparities of power within and among countries; reduce gender inequality and youth unemployment; respond to humanitarian crises and massive forced displacements; and promote macroeconomic and social development.

28. The 2030 Agenda represented a paradigm shift that would require enormous resources: it had been proposed, at the seventieth session of the General Assembly, that States should allocate 1 per cent of their annual defence budgets to a special United Nations fund for sustainable development. At the same time, policymaking should be democratic and participatory and ensure the protection of the most vulnerable. To that end, supportive, transparent and accountable public institutions were needed to combat discrimination and social exclusion and ensure rigorous monitoring and assessment of sectors at risk. Despite the global economic situation, Kazakhstan had increased annually its funding of programmes for children, youth, women, the elderly and persons with disabilities. The national Kazakhstan 2050 strategy and the associated economic policy would guarantee improvements in education, healthcare, social housing and social security and seek to modernize and develop the labour market and the information and technology sectors. Under that strategy, youth had access to free formal education at all levels, as well as vocational training and microloans, and 10,000 Kazakh students had graduated from top-ranking universities abroad thanks to a presidential scholarship programme.

29. Disability must be given global recognition as a human rights issue. In implementing the 2030 Agenda, his Government sought to ensure that persons with disabilities could participate in decisions affecting their lives and seek redress for violations of their rights, to which end it had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; enacted a law on the social protection of persons with disabilities; and a adopted national action plan for 2012–2018 aimed at opening up new horizons for persons with disabilities. In order to eliminate poverty among such persons, the Government had established a three-tiered social security system comprising basic and supplementary pension schemes. Moreover, in 2018, under its programme to promote employment for persons with disabilities, the Government would subsidize jobs for such persons and introduce a mandated quota system.

30. The Government promoted the concept of active ageing to ensure that the elderly, who accounted for 10 per cent of the population, enjoyed their rights without discrimination. In addition, it had offered to host a regional hub of the United Nations in Almaty to promote sustainable development, facilitate humanitarian assistance and build resilience nationally and regionally in Central Asia.

31. **Ms. Geissel** (Germany), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, over the past six months, she had spoken to many German youth about the work and values of the United Nations, as well as their hopes and fears for the future. While many of them had grown up in a peaceful and secure environment in which respect for human rights and freedoms was guaranteed, they were frightened at the possible outbreak of wars during their lifetimes, owing to the rise of right-wing populism in Europe; the growing number of weapons and increase in militarization worldwide; and the abandonment of diplomacy in favour of displays of military strength. In order to preserve peace and security, the international community must strive to return to a political culture of dialogue and cooperation, an endeavour in which youth had a critical role to play, as recognized in Security Council resolution 2250 (2015). She called on Member States to make progress towards disarmament, including by banning nuclear weapons and strengthening arms control, in order to ensure a more secure future and prevent terrorism.

32. **Mr. Kuschick** (Germany), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the positive atmosphere that had characterized the multilateral events for youth in which he had participated over the past six months inspired confidence for the future of mutual cooperation and for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Many of the youth he had encountered had fled to Europe from areas affected by conflict and terrorism, having undergone torture and lost close family members, but, like European youth, nurtured hopes for a peaceful future. The host societies that welcomed such refugees must appreciate the challenges they faced in adapting to their new environments and, more broadly, must value the diverse contributions and talents of all members of society, regardless of their race, sexual orientation and gender identity.

33. **Ms. Pansa** (Suriname), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, in order to advance social development, efforts must be made to improve access to high-quality education, in particular by investing in early learning initiatives. Governments must provide individuals with the opportunity to fulfil their potential by continuously improving the quality of education through academic accreditation, diversification of learning opportunities, and training of instructors; and by broadening the age range for compulsory school attendance to cover children between the ages of 4 and 16. While school attendance was currently compulsory for children in Suriname between the ages of 7 and 12, most children started school at the age of 4, and a draft law had recently been introduced that would raise the requirement to age 16.

34. **Mr. Koniki** (Suriname), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the incidence of sexual violence

against youth in his country could be partly attributed to the conflicting social messages conveyed to boys and girls with regard to sexual activity. While girls were taught to resist sexual advances from boys, boys were simply taught not to impregnate girls, a lesson that implied permission to pursue girls without regard for their personal and physical boundaries, which, in turn, contributed to sexual violence. Sexual education programmes aimed at young men and boys would therefore be essential for increasing awareness and shifting mentalities with respect to the unequal treatment of boys and girls. Parems and caregivers must also be educated on the issues of sexual and reproductive health and violence against women and girls. Youth had a critical role to play in advancing such change, in particular by refusing to condone or excuse sexual violence.

35. **Ms. Matar** (United Arab Emirates) said that her Government wished to express its deepest condolences for the terrorist attack in Las Vegas and reaffirmed its condemnation of violence and terrorism of all kinds. Speaking on behalf of her country's youth delegates, she said that young Emiratis wanted to be partners in development but were often excluded from decision-making. Nevertheless, considerable progress had been made in the area of youth development. For example, a young woman had been appointed Minister of State for Youth Affairs, and youth councils and forums had also been organized to empower the young.

36. At the international level, the United Arab Emirates had undertaken many youth-related initiatives in 2017, including launching a new Arab youth centre and distributing grants for young people in the Arab region. Furthermore, its delegation to the General Assembly once again included youth delegates. The delegation welcomed the appointment of the most recent Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and would work with its partners in the Committee to present its concerns and views about youth empowerment and employment.

37. **Ms. Pavković** (Serbia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that her country had established a ministry of youth and was implementing a practical and attainable national youth strategy. In addition to being the 2019 European Youth Capital, it was working to provide housing, health care and education for many of the thousands of young migrants within its borders. Serbia, along with five other Western Balkan States, had established the Regional Youth Cooperation Office to promote reconciliation and cooperation among youth in the Balkans.

38. If allowed, young people could and would contribute to the future of their countries, including to attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Youth representatives should therefore be included in national working groups on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All too often, the needs and demands of young people were not addressed.

39. *Ms. Al-Temimi (Qatar), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

40. **Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica) said that his country's laws, policies and programmes were designed to ensure the well-being of all, with emphasis on the most vulnerable. In view of the many dimensions of poverty, it had been using a multidimensional poverty index since 2015 to target, evaluate and refine national social policies. It also had programmes providing the most vulnerable groups with access to information and communication technologies.

41. To build cohesive, resilient societies, it was essential to promote citizen participation and social inclusion, including by ensuring quality formal and informal education, which could also help to reduce the growing ranks of the young unemployed. Breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and inequality also required investment in health and in protecting young people from violence. With respect to women, gender violence and wage and opportunity inequality were barriers to true social development. To promote labour market equality, Costa Rica was participating in the Gender Equality Seal programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was also encouraging the recognition and redistribution of unpaid labour and caregiving and reorganizing its caregiving network to make it easier for women to work.

42. **Mr. Uğurluoğlu** (Turkey) said that Turkey's tenth development plan (2014–2018) took a multidimensional approach that was yielding many positive results, particularly in regard to access to education and health care. His Government's rights-based approach to development promoted the inclusion of all. It aimed to provide access to basic services and decision-making for disabled people; to address the rights and needs of the elderly; to empower women and ensure gender equality and to provide quality education and decent employment opportunities for the young.

43. However, the unprecedented migrant and refugee flows had a direct impact on Turkey's social development agenda. It hosted the largest refugee population in the world, including many school-age children, and it was continuing to provide for their

humanitarian, health and education needs. Syrians had even been given temporary access to the Turkish labour market. Nevertheless, greater international cooperation and meaningful burden- and responsibility-sharing were imperative.

44. **Ms. Sandoval** (Nicaragua) said that, as a framework for achieving a just world order, the 2030 Agenda represented one of the most important achievements in the history of the United Nations. At the international level, Nicaragua remained committed to the Millennium Development and Sustainable Development Goals and to achieving peace through negotiation and dialogue. Domestically, its efforts to restore economic, social and cultural rights had yielded substantial improvements in gender equality, investment, development and security, and it had set targets for the delivery of titles to land as well as for water and sanitation, telecommunications, health, the environment, job creation, education and housing.

45. To promote the inclusion of disabled people, it provided priority administrative processing and transport benefits and had published a special community outreach booklet. Older people had a right to a pension and to recreation, and steps had been taken to improve their health care and include them in socio-productive programmes. The 2015 Family Code recognized the central role of the family in development and social change.

46. **Ms. Covei** and **Mr. Măcelaru** (Romania), speaking as youth delegates, said that for young people to effect meaningful change, they must be empowered. Countries should educate young people to speak their minds and then listen to them. Young Romanians wanted to be taken seriously by those in power.

47. Young people also wanted an education focused on critical thinking and skills acquisition that would prepare them for the job market. Outdated, information retention-based education systems were one cause of youth unemployment, which led to youth apathy and disenfranchisement. Furthermore, poor children generally did not receive the extra help they needed to succeed in school and escape poverty.

48. Young members of vulnerable groups such as girls, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, ethnic minorities and disabled people should be made aware of their rights, so that they could overcome discrimination and exercise decisional autonomy.

49. **Ms. Horbachova** (Ukraine) said that, despite ongoing challenges, her country was working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It was rebuilding its economy and infrastructure and had been able to increase its share in the European market very substantially under the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. It had cleaned up its banking system, cut public spending and initiated cooperation with the International Monetary Fund, and it was finally making inroads on corruption. Ukraine had also recently instituted a reform to improve health care quality and extend basic coverage to all, and it continued to promote gender equality. In March, it had strengthened a 2014 law protecting rights and facilitating humanitarian assistance for the almost 2 million people internally displaced by Russia's occupation of Crimea and aggression in the Donbas region. However, normal conditions could not be re-established without ending Russian military aggression and restoring full Ukrainian sovereignty.

50. **Ms. Pwint Phyu Thinn** (Myanmar) said that her country emphasized support for young people, the elderly and the disabled. Publicly subsidized voluntary primary night schools and youth centres had been opened. Furthermore, her Government was developing a youth policy and had submitted an updated child rights law to the national legislature for approval. Recognizing the importance of young people as agents of change, the State Counsellor had taken part in "peace talks" with young people earlier that year. Because of their power to effect change, youth delegates should participate in more international forums.

51. Myanmar had adopted a plan of action on older persons in June 2014 and had enacted a law on older persons in 2016. In addition to adopting a law domesticating the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015, it had taken steps to assist persons with hearing impairment by introducing sign language interpreter training and sign language services and making arrangements to ensure their social participation, and it had also opened schools for the visually impaired. Moreover, it was conducting programmes to raise awareness of disability-based discrimination, neglect and violence and encouraging employers to hire the disabled.

52. **Mr. Itegboje** (Nigeria) said that his country's social protection programme was an integral part of its development agenda. One of its major components was the conditional cash transfer scheme. To improve the standard of living, Nigeria had recently launched a low-interest housing loan programme. It also offered interest- and collateral-free loans to grass-roots-level entrepreneurs. It was empowering youth by providing skills training and employment opportunities, and its locally sourced school meals programme was the largest of its kind in Africa. In the federal civil service,

2 per cent of vacancies were reserved for persons with disabilities, and a disabled person had been appointed to assist the president on disability matters. Although enactment of a national policy on ageing was still pending, Nigeria had begun implementing policies to empower and protect the aged and combat elderly poverty.

53. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that inclusivity was the cornerstone of his country's social development policies. To tap the potential of young people, who constituted almost half of the population, it provided universal health care, free primary and secondary education and sports and recreational and enrichment opportunities, and it also emphasized jobs for young people, youth leadership and youth entrepreneurship. As dictated by the Constitution and law, the Government had established mechanisms to ensure equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, introduced a disability allowance, and it was setting an example for the private sector by providing employment opportunities for the disabled in state-owned enterprises and public agencies. Gender equality in the workplace was protected under the Gender Equality Act of 2016, and the State was closing in on its mandatory target of 30 per cent women on the boards of state-owned enterprises. In addition, a number of recent laws provided the legal foundation for eliminating gender-based violence and harassment.

54. **Ms. AlZouman** (Kuwait) said that her Government agreed on the importance of strengthening youth governmental institutions. It welcomed the renewed attention of various countries to encouraging youth civic participation and volunteer work and had launched a number of initiatives to encourage youth volunteerism. To promote the social integration of disabled people, Kuwait had established a public authority for disabled affairs and provided protection, medical, cultural and psychological services for them, as well as education and training. It was also making every effort to ensure that they had decent employment. Older people could receive monthly stipends, housing and legal services and did not pay fees for public services. In accordance with its constitutional obligation to protect and strengthen the family, the State gave financial assistance to needy families, and it had established centres within the family courts to settle domestic disputes and counsel the parties. It was also reviewing its domestic violence laws with a view to preserving the dignity of family members who had been subjected to violence.

55. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that social investment was the linchpin of Venezuelan public policy and the Constitution of 1999. With its focus on health care, education, culture, housing and food, his Government's 2013–2017 development plan accorded with and complemented the Sustainable Development Goals and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. Thanks to a series of social programmes, his country had made rapid strides in eliminating poverty and extreme poverty, equalizing income distribution and providing decent housing. Indeed, it now ranked in the high human development category of the human development index.

56. Even in the face of attacks on its currency, coercive unilateral financial and economic embargoes and threats of intervention, his country would continue to invest in social programmes for the most vulnerable and to strive to build bridges of diplomacy and dialogue. Unity and cooperation among the countries of the South was more important than ever in order to leverage payment of the social debt. The United Nations had an immediate duty to promote effective poverty eradication polices, sustainable financing and a people-centred new international order.

57. **Mr. Amir Hamzah** (Malaysia) said that, in recognition of the critical importance of youth participation in economic development, his Government pursued a national youth development policy focused on empowerment, human resource development, entrepreneurship and, more recently, leadership and volunteerism. It was also providing a platform for young people to participate in discussions on issues that affected them, such as cost of living, productivity and unemployment, and to help to set future policy.

58. Despite progress on tackling poverty, growing inequalities pointed to a need for social protection. As recently announced, Malaysia intended to collaborate with developed and developing countries, multilateral institutions and the private sector to improve its transfer of knowledge and skills to other countries. As the Secretary-General mentioned in his report on cooperatives in social development (A/72/159), agricultural growth and rural development were critical to the eradication of poverty. Cooperatives, including cooperative financial assistance, could contribute to such development, as could skills training. Malaysia was committed to the well-being of its people, irrespective of differences and vulnerabilities, and would continue to work to create a consensus and policy prescriptions on social development.

59. **Mr. Dumklang** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that the Thai youth delegates wished to highlight three groups of people who must not be left

behind in development: youth, older persons, and migrants. As fast learners who naturally embraced diversity and had the courage to take action against inequality and injustice, young people were ideal agents of change. In that connection, the youth delegates were eager to share their experiences and knowledge of Thailand's inclusive, moderate, people-centred development model, the "sufficient economy philosophy". With regard to older persons, they supported efforts to foster intergenerational solidarity, which was encouraged in Thailand through activities for passing on traditional and cultural knowledge.

60. **Ms. Chittrawat** (Thailand), speaking as a youth delegate, said that Thai young people recognized of the contribution of migrants to Thailand's social and economic development. Young people around the world could be the bridge of understanding between their societies and migrants. Information technology and social media could also be used to shape public perceptions and encourage social harmony and a culture of acceptance. The youth delegates urged the United Nations to continue providing platforms for young people to express themselves and to do the same for other groups whose voices were seldom heard.

61. **Mr. Rombouts** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that a good education included not only instruction in academic subjects but also social, cultural and sports-related activities. To improve the quality of education, all school boards should consider bringing students into their decision-making processes. In its resolution 2250 (2015), the Security Council had acknowledged the positive role that young people could play in peacebuilding, opening the door to their participation in a vast range of related fields. It was now widely recognized that youth participation could lead to better outcomes.

62. **Ms. Keita** (Belgium), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, unfortunately, a young person's socioeconomic background remained the strongest determinant of academic success. A child's ability to succeed in school should not be limited by the parents' level of education, migrant status or economic means or by the child's skin colour, religion, mother tongue, health or gender.

63. **Ms. Mukhtar** (Sudan) said that her country's national poverty reduction strategy included creation of employment for young men and women, establishment of a fund to finance educated young entrepreneurs, expansion of basic and higher education and eradication of illiteracy. The Zakat Chamber funded social services and food security and played a leading role in supporting academic and health care facilities and promoting programmes to encourage cooperatives.

64. In view of the importance of political stability for prosperity and social security, Sudan was implementing the final recommendations of the comprehensive national dialogue. The recommended measures would promote social development, especially since they benefited the most vulnerable populations.

65. Stronger international cooperation was needed to fulfil international commitments to social development. The debts of developing countries were stumbling blocks for social development and should be cancelled.

66. **Mr. Najem** (Bahrain) said that young people, who comprised almost 60 per cent of the population of the Middle East and some 48 per cent of the population of Bahrain, had tremendous potential to promote development and facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In cooperation with UNDP, his country had therefore formulated a national youth strategy to address the needs of young people, and to uphold their right to participate fully in decision making processes and in initiatives to promote inclusive development. His country's Government Action Plan for the period 2015 to 2018 also addressed the needs of young people in Bahrain.

67. The King Hamad Youth Empowerment Award to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, launched in January 2017, would encourage young people to participate in efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda and reflected Bahrain's support for all initiatives fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Bahrain moreover, believed it was crucial to involve all sectors of society, including young people, in States' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

68. Bahrain had hosted a number of conferences to encourage young people to participate in development initiatives, including the ninth International Youth Conference, held in Manama in April 2017, which had focused, in particular, on the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. That conference and had been attended by more than one thousand young people as well as representatives of international organizations, governments and civil society organizations.

69. In line with the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, and to promote the development of Bahrain's private sector and position it as the key driver of the country's economic development, Bahrain had established the Tamkeen organization, which, inter alia, provided skills training and guidance to young people to

facilitate their entry into the labour market. Tamkeen also implemented projects to strengthen the role of women in Bahraini society, encourage entrepreneurship and address the economic challenges impeding the establishment and growth of Bahraini business enterprises.

70. In November 2016, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) had presented an award to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, in recognition of the success of the Bahraini version of a UNIDO programme that promoted the economic empowerment of young people and women. In the light of its success, UNIDO had, to date, used the Bahraini version of the programme as model when launching similar initiatives in 48 other countries.

71. **Mr. Shava** (Zimbabwe) said that his country's participation in the voluntary national reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development demonstrated its commitment to social development. Sustainable development was at the core of its economic development plan, which was based on four national priorities: food security, poverty eradication, infrastructure and value addition. To combat rural poverty, it had implemented a command agriculture scheme for maize which had resulted in a bumper harvest and was already being extended to other crops.

72. **Ms. Fofana** (Burkina Faso) said that, under the decree domesticating the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Burkina Faso had conducted a census of disabled children in 2013. The most recent economic and social development plan emphasized support for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Burkina Faso had instituted concrete measures to assist them, including vocational training and basic social services for disabled persons, comprehensive assistance for many orphans and vulnerable children, a national programme to assist street children, a law on the protection and promotion of older persons and a comprehensive women's empowerment programme. By 2020, it hoped to increase the percentage of working disabled persons to 50 per cent, provide support for a larger number of vulnerable children and eliminate the phenomenon of street children.

73. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that the least developed countries, particularly landlocked and island States, were more vulnerable to climate change, extremism, forced migration and food and energy crises. Every effort should be made to ensure that their graduation from the least developed category was both smooth and sustainable.

74. As a country with more than 125 languages and ethnic groups, Nepal depended on being able to turn diversity into unity and national strength and was guided in all development policies, programmes and plans by its inclusive, rights-based 2015 Constitution. By law, women were guaranteed 33 per cent representation in the national legislature and 40 per cent representation in local government, and hiring quotas had been set for marginalized groups in the civil service. Special measures were also in place for the promotion of members of such groups. Despite scarce resources, Nepal's social protection system embraced older people, single women, disadvantaged ethnic and indigenous groups and disabled people, and it was committed to ensuring free compulsory education for all children. However, in view of its landlocked status, legacy of internal conflict, geographic complexity and vulnerability to climate change, Nepal was concerned about the sustainability of its remarkable progress in social development.

75. **Ms. Sukkar** (Jordan) said that the Arab region was facing unprecedented instabilities, conflicts and waves of migrants and displaced persons — challenges that could not be overcome without global cooperation for peace and security. The influx of Syrian refugees and the protracted nature of the regional crises had pushed Jordan to its limits and affected all aspects of Jordanian life. Nevertheless, it was moving forward on its 10-year socioeconomic blueprint for achieving a prosperous, resilient, and inclusive economy whilst deepening reforms and inclusion. Together with Norway, it had recently co-chaired a meeting on youth, peace and security. It had also launched the Champions of Youth group of countries, and with Norway, the Group of Friends of Preventing Violent Extremism. Its new law on persons with disabilities introduced the concept of informed consent, took a comprehensive approach to violence and required the Government to present a national action plan on deinstitutionalization within 10 years. Jordan remained steadfast in its commitment to enabling and expanding the contributions of older people to families, communities and society at large.

76. To achieve shared prosperity, the burden of social development must be more evenly distributed. Jordan was determined to safeguard its development achievements whilst remaining an inclusive, resilient safe-haven and oasis of stability.

77. **Mr. Gebru** (Ethiopia) said that his country was implementing a strategy aimed at conserving natural resources and reducing the effects of climate change. Its Growth and Transformation Plan 2015–2020 emphasized education and training, health care, science

and technology, capacity-building and good governance, public participation, democracy- and national consensus-building, issues relating to women, children and youth, social welfare and labour issues and environmental protection. It had taken concrete steps to promote the full participation of disabled people in all spheres of life and had enacted a national plan on older persons in line with the Madrid Plan of Action. While youth volunteerism had increased significantly, youth employment remained a challenge. In response, the Government had set up a revolving fund dedicated to youth employment creation and was creating industrial parks to encourage the growth of manufacturing and small- and medium-sized enterprises, which were major sources of employment. Lastly, to ensure more inclusive growth, it had established a safety net programme that benefited millions of people in need.

78. **Mr. Mikayilli** (Azerbaijan) said that the benefits of Azerbaijan's fast growing economy had been distributed across the population through the construction of schools, hospitals and health centres as well as homes for internally displaced persons. By 2020, Azerbaijan aimed to reduce the poverty rate from 5 to 4 per cent and to improve the quality and coverage of the health care system. Since 2010, it had been considered a country with high human development.

79. The Government was accelerating its efforts to diversify the economy by creating industrial parks in the regions, increasing spending on agriculture and rural economic activities, generating durable, decent employment and granting low-interest loans to entrepreneurs. Regarding older people, a new state social protection programme had been developed for the 2017-2021 period, and the retirement age had recently been raised to 65 in view of increased life expectancy. Under the national action plan on protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, disabled children could now be schooled at home.

80. **Ms. Grigoryan** (Armenia), noting that more than 22,000 displaced persons had sought protection in Armenia in recent years, said that her Government attached great importance to their integration and settlement and was grateful for the support of international institutions and diaspora organizations in that regard.

81. In partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund and UNDP, Azerbaijan was moving from a medical model of disability assessment to a rights-based model that included applicant self-assessment. In line with its emphasis on youth development, it had launched a number of initiatives to provide more innovative, higher quality education.

82. However, despite notable progress, Azerbaijan still faced many challenges for social development, including external challenges: unilateral coercive measures, a land blockade and closed borders. Regional and subregional confidence-building measures should be used promote social development in conflict situations and could become part of wider regional peace, security and reconciliation efforts.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.